

BUS LANES

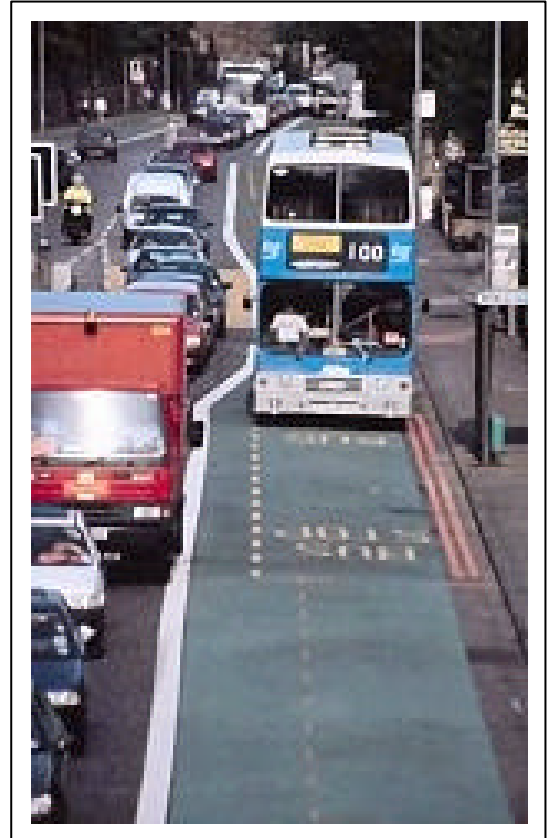
PUBLIC TRANSPORT OR PUBLIC MENACE?

Bus lanes might have their uses but their implementation needs a little more thought....

Bus lanes are a favourite weapon in the anti-car arsenal. They are being abused by many local authorities to deliberately impede the free flow of traffic on main roads. Others impose them because they perceive it as the politically correct thing to do, and steadfastly refuse to respond to the massive public opinion against them.

Bus lanes have many negative effects:

- They increase journey times unnecessarily.
- They turn dual carriageways into single track roads with no passing places forcing every vehicle to travel at the speed of the slowest.
- They create traffic jams where there were previously none.
- They create bottlenecks at the start of the bus lane, delaying buses as well as other traffic.
- They create hazardous situations where vehicles wish to turn left.
- They enthuse bus drivers to drive aggressively by encouraging them to think they have more right to be on the road than anyone else.
- They encourage bus drivers to drive at normal speed past queues of stationary traffic, oblivious to pedestrians who may be trying cross between traffic that may be obscuring them from the bus driver's view.
- They inspire traffic to divert onto other roads, often residential side roads.
- They make it more difficult for pedestrians to cross the road by removing the natural gaps that appear in free flowing traffic.
- They generate contempt for the law.
- They divert police resources away from dealing with criminals.
- They incite road rage.
- They are often counter-productive in terms of improving the bus service.
If more people wait for buses, the more often the bus has to stop, which increases the journey time. This is exasperated by some local authorities putting in additional bus stops which slow the journey even more.



Criteria

The Association of British Drivers has recently called for the adoption of a set of criteria for bus lanes, and for all existing bus lanes that do not meet these criteria to be scrapped immediately, with severe financial penalties for local authorities that conspire to deliberately obstruct the public highway.

- Bus lanes should only be used if the road has three or more lanes in the direction of the bus lane.
The use of bus lanes on two lane dual carriageways turns the road into a single track road with no passing places, and thus constitutes deliberate obstruction of the public highway.
- Bus lanes should only be used on roads where most traffic is travelling along the road for some distance.
The use of bus lanes on uni-directional ring roads is unacceptable due to the serious problem of frequent conflicting traffic joining and leaving the road on both sides. Such roads are effectively large roundabouts, and bus lanes on roundabouts are clearly dangerous.
- Bus lanes may only be imposed where there is regular congestion in order to allow buses to jump the queue.
Imposing bus lanes on free flowing roads in order to maliciously create congestion is totally unacceptable.
- Bus lanes may only be imposed to allow buses to avoid congestion after all possible remedial measures have been taken to eliminate the cause of the congestion, such as junction improvements.
- Bus lanes should only operate during times when there is an average of at least one bus every five minutes.
Many bus lanes are enforced during the whole day, when service frequency is low outside rush hours.
- Bus lanes may only be placed on the left hand side of any road.
- Bus lanes may not be used on motorways.
- Bus lanes must stop at least 50m from any junction to allow traffic to turn left safely.
Frequent problems occur when drivers turning left refuse to use the bus lane as a deceleration lane; and/or turn across the path of a bus travelling at higher speed. Therefore, the bus lane must stop well short of each junction, or there must be clear and unambiguous indication that drivers can use the bus lane when turning left.
- Vehicles turning onto a road with bus lanes should be able to use the bus lane as an acceleration lane.
Bus lanes create queues of slowing moving traffic without gaps thus preventing vehicles from joining the road. Edging forward to try to persuade another vehicle to let you in may cause conflict with vehicles using the bus lane.
- Bus lanes must flow in the same direction as the rest of the traffic.
Contraflow bus lanes are a danger to other road users, including pedestrians who may fail to look in the opposite direction to that which the rest of the traffic appears to be travelling.
- Bus lanes may only be placed in a lane that buses actually use.
The ABD has knowledge of a bus lane in Halesowen which Dudley Council installed beyond the point at which all buses had to move into the right hand lane in order to turn right.
- Motorcyclists should be allowed to use bus lanes at all times.
Motorcycles do not contribute towards congestion and there is no reason not to allow them free access to bus lanes.
- Slow vehicles such as excavators and milk floats should be allowed to use bus lanes to avoid holding up traffic.
Preventing such slow traffic from using bus lanes may cause great frustration which can create hazardous situations.
- Traffic islands may not be placed between the bus lane and the rest of the carriageway.
Islands used to locate traffic lights with bus priority signalling present a serious and unnecessary hazard at times when the bus lane is not in operation.
- Bus Lanes may not be segregated from the rest of the carriageway by any physical obstruction.
Such measures effectively block roads completely, greatly impeding the progress of emergency vehicles, and putting lives at risk.

- Buses and Coaches shall be allowed to use bus lanes at all times.
This may sound obvious, yet there are a surprising number of bus lanes which only allow local scheduled bus services to use them. Chartered buses and coaches — whether service or chartered — are prohibited, this situation is utterly absurd.
- Essential service vehicles shall be allowed to use bus lanes at all times. These would include:
 - Ambulance, Fire, Police, Coastguard, or any emergency service vehicle (whether on an emergency call or not)
 - Hospital vehicles, National Blood Transfusion service, and other essential medical supplies.
 - Any Doctor, Nurse or Midwife attending a patient.
 - Any vehicle conveying a person requiring urgent medical treatment to Hospital.
 - Any veterinary surgeon or animal welfare service attending or conveying a sick or injured animal.
 - Utility company vehicles en route to an emergency (gas,electric,water,etc)
 - Breakdown service vehicles en route to a breakdown (AA,RAC,etc)
 - Royal Mail vehicles
 - Meals on wheels services
 - Military vehicles
 - Funeral cortèges
 - Lifeboat crew responding to emergency call
 - Vehicles transporting prisoners
- Cars carrying two or more persons should be allowed to use bus lanes.
A car carrying passengers is far more efficient in terms of low pollution and road space usage than the vast majority of buses which travel almost empty.